

PASTORAL POVERTY

The Trials of the Twentieth Century Minister

WHY CLERGYMEN ARE LEAVING THE PROFESSION; SOME COLD FACTS TOLD BY ONE OF THEM.

The report recently given out by Rev. John Haynes Holmes of the church of the Messiah, New York city, showing that 7 per cent. of the clergymen of the Unitarian denomination gave up the active ministry during 1910, causes one to pause and inquire into the reasons for the increasing tendency among the clergy to forsake their chosen calling. According to Dr. Holmes, the Unitarians lost over three times as many ministers in 1910 through withdrawal from the active work of the ministry as were lost through death. Thirty-six clergymen out of a total body numbering only 538 gave up their work last year and are now reported to be devoting their energies to other tasks in other fields.

The proportion probably does not hold in other denominations; in fact, Dr. Holmes shows that last year was an exceptional year in this regard with the Unitarians. The condition referred to is more or less prevalent, however, in all denominations, and is said to be increasing. The constant leakage from the ministerial ranks of men who have been especially trained to lead in the work of the church has probably never been so extensive as it is at the present time.

When one investigates the reasons that are back of this somewhat alarming condition, he is impressed first of all by the fact that a very large percentage of ministers who lay down their work in the church do so for financial reasons. The increased cost of living is making itself felt nowhere with more severity than in the average parsonage. Many a minister and his good wife are practicing methods of economy that would cause some of their parishioners to blush for shame if only they could be made to feel their own responsibility in the matter.

In almost all lines of labor the wage scale has increased during the past decade—except the ministry. The Brotherhoods of railway engineers and trainmen only recently secured a 10 per cent. increase in the salaries of their 100,000 members. The miners in the Pennsylvania coal fields had the sympathy of the entire country to back them in their winning fight for higher wages a few years back. And yet the average pay of clergymen, outside the large cities, is said to be no greater than the average wage of the miners before the strike. The average annual salary paid to ministers in this country, outside the 150 largest cities, is only \$573, or less than \$50 a month. The average policeman gets \$900; the average railroad engineer receives \$1200. In one church in Brookline the pastor is paid \$1500, while the janitor is reported to receive \$1200.

The average wage paid to clergymen becomes more illuminating when we are told that the average cost of living per family is, or was some time ago, \$751 a year. Thus, while the average policeman, engineer and mechanic of the better class receives an average wage which is considerably above the average cost of living, the average clergyman, on the other hand, outside of what might be called "metropolitan pulpits," receives an average wage which is considerably less than the average cost of living.

But it is not alone the small stipend that ministers receive which is driving so many of them into other fields. Ordinarily, in any line of work aside from the ministry, if a man seeks another situation he goes after it in a fearless, open manner, confident in his own ability to do the work in question, and believing that his worth will be recognized and compensated according to its merit. In the ministry, however, a man is hedged in by certain professional customs and considerations which make the matter of severing one pastoral connection and taking up another to be a matter not only of great tactfulness and diplomacy, but also one requiring a great deal of time and annoyance. The modern system of "candidating" is enough in itself to drive a self-respecting clergyman into the insurance business or cause him to rent an abandoned farm and go to raising chickens.

One who has not undertaken to go into a vacant pulpit as a candidate knows nothing of the agony of the experience. The candidate prepares the best sermon he has ever prepared, knowing full well that every other mother's son who is seeking the pastorate in question will do the same. Not all candidates are as frank and plain-spoken as the one who, after laying his manuscript on the desk before him, said to his waiting congregation: "I want to begin my sermon this morning by assuring you that while this sermon is by no means the best one I have ever prepared, it is by no means the worst." The congregation subsequently decided that it wanted a preacher whose average homiletical effort was higher than the sample offered them.

A candidate usually feels justified in taking the best sermon he is capable of producing before a strange and highly critical audience. He needs the confidence that his best effort lends him to offset the nervousness which comes over him as he sees the members of his congregation taking note of his hair-cut or the cut of his clothes. The general comparing of notes among the people in the pews, as he goes from one part of the services to the other, is anything but reassuring. The uplifted brows or the negative shake of the head as

some elderly spinster in the front row listens to some remark of her next neighbor, adds nothing to his composure, and certainly lends no spiritual zest to his message. For the time, being he feels himself an automaton, going through his paces for the edification of his hearers. Is it any wonder that when a man returns home from such an experience—having learned on his visit to the vacant church that he is only one of 87 applicants, many of whom are yet to be heard—that he is in such a frame of mind that a proposition to become a book agent or almost anything else becomes alluring?

The ministerial profession is unlike almost any other business on earth in that a candidate is always kept in the dark in regard to the condition of the church in whose vacant pulpit he has asked to be heard. In business life, a company seeking a manager thinks it only proper that before he accepts the position in question he should have free access to the books and learn about the condition of the business. This is especially true if the company is seeking a man to take full charge of a plant, as a minister is expected to take charge of a church. But the minister must accept the call, if it is offered to him, blindly and "for better or for worse," according as fortune favors him. It is not unusual for him to find after he is on the ground that the church is hopelessly in debt—a condition that is not infrequently concealed from him—or that conditions are such that for some other reason success is not possible.

A clergyman always gropes in the dark on a candidating trip, and he comes at last to feel, after he has made two or three vain attempts to better his fortunes, that "it's heads you win, tails I lose" in almost every venture he makes of this kind. The churches are usually looking for bargains in ministerial timber, and it sometimes pleases them to conceal purposely the real difficulties of the situation until they have landed high and dry the ministerial fish who has snapped at their bait.

One clergyman recently told of how he accepted a charge in a large city of the middle West, believing that the location of the church was such that success was bound to follow. The trustees pointed out the fine residence neighborhood in which the church was located, and impressed it upon him that it was most fortunately situated in this regard. After he had been on the ground for some time, he found to his dismay that 95 per cent. of the families who lived within half or three-quarters of a mile were Jews. They were Jews of the better sort, to be sure, but not available material for "neighborhood support" in a Protestant church. And yet the appearance of the neighborhood lent itself easily to the misrepresentations of the trustees, who had only one thought in mind—namely, to secure a minister for a church that is, and always will be, a forlorn hope until it is picked up bodily and moved 2½ miles away.

Lack of proper financial support and the soul-trying experiences of seeking pastorate through the "candidating system" are not the only things that make men turn from the ministry. Some one has said: "Only God and the pastor know the heart-breaking, faith-destroying crimes that are committed by some churches against their pastors; men perfectly able and willing to do the work the church needs to have done, but who are simply not allowed to do it because of some crafty, wire-pulling, ecclesiastical boss, who assumes to know more in a minute about running a church than the pastor does in a lifetime." Many a church has been wrecked by a boss, and that boss not always a man. The church boss can usually put to shame the political boss and treacherous methods of administration. "Many a minister has learned this to his sorrow. Is it any wonder, when a minister finds himself compelled to shape his work and his message to please some busybody of a church official, that he loses faith in the calling to which he was ordained and turns his back upon it?"

A layman was returning from a church meeting at which matters of importance had been under consideration. He was in a most unchristian mood because of the unchristian wrangling he had listened to on the part of those who sought to dictate the course of affairs in the church. "It fills me with something a good deal hotter than righteous indignation," he said, "to see a whole church—minister, trustees, elders, and all the rest, bowing down to two or three old bundles of rags in the middle aisle just because they clutch the strings of certain mighty purses. I am ready to resign my position in the church after every such meeting." And yet, the minister, if he would hold his job, must cheerfully tolerate these "bundles of rags," and show a smiling countenance to all other disagreeable members of his parish, whether they find fault with him for doing a thing or find fault with him for not doing it. He must show his own Christianity, whether others do or not.

"The game isn't worth the candle," said a clergyman recently to a sympathetic friend. "I am no longer needed as a spiritual leader. I am only an ecclesiastical 'jack-all-trades.' I must engineer the finances so that there will be money enough to meet running expenses. I must be present at all the sewing circles and missionary meetings. I must plan this and plan that; must devise new and unthought of ways of entangling stray nickles from the pockets of the unwary, and must evolve 'miles of pennies or dimes' to raise money for a new furnace or a carpet for the ladies' parlor. Then there is the calling—that's the big bugbear of my life—the never ending social chit-chat that passes for a pastoral call. I don't object to calling on the sick, but this running here and there with no other reason than to be seen in the homes of my people and make them think I am earning my pay, this is the worst of it for me."

The day of the old-time pastoral visit is past and gone, and in its place has come a meaningless social call. The coming of the minister is no longer a time of prayer or of

questioning in regard to the state of one's spiritual welfare. These days have gone. The pastoral call is now usually a little chat upon the weather, or at most concerned with church or local gossip of a friendly, social nature. "I'm not paid for preaching," said one clergyman. "That's the least of my duties. I'm paid largely for attending thimble parties and pink teas, and for leaving calling cards around the parish."

Many clergymen no doubt turn their backs upon the ministry convinced in their own minds that they can serve God and their fellow men just as acceptably in other ways and places. Still others labor on year after year upon meager salaries that permit of nothing being laid by for age and declining years—facing the certain retirement to smaller and more obscure fields as their years increase. It is the age of young men in the ministry, as it is the age of young men in business. The "dead line" is no longer 60; it is creeping steadily down into the 50s and 40s.

"We want a young man who can hold our young people," is the cry going up from countless pastorless churches. In medicine and law age and ripened experience bring the larger demand and the better compensation. In the churches the half-baked "theologue" is at a premium. When he becomes seasoned and knows full well how to minister to the sorrow and sin he finds everywhere about him, he becomes a past number, an "antique," ready to be laid on the shelf. He has crossed the dead line. Now let him go to keeping bees or raising chickens. He is no longer wanted—save in exceptional instances—so exceptional that it proves the rule.

Just how raw and inefficient the average "theologue" is apt to be upon graduation is evident from a recent statement by President Hamilton of Tufts college to the effect that of the 10 students now in the Crane theological school of that institution, four were admitted conditioned, and four more were so far from having completed a high school education that they could only be admitted as special students.

Ye gods! Is it any wonder men turn from the ministry and seek a living in other fields of activity? [Springfield Republican.]

BEAUTIFUL AND ELUSIVE JEWEL. Diamonds Have Peculiar Effect on Nervous Man.

As Harry Klein, George Gardner, Elias Nathan, Frank Miller and Jake Mintz were seated about a little table at luncheon time recently—it was the day before Christmas—Mr. Nathan took from his pocket an exquisite diamond necklace and passed it around for inspection. While those about the table were praising the beautiful sparklers the necklace suddenly disappeared. Mr. Nathan's concern over the loss was not nearly as great as was that of Mr. Gardner, in whose hands the necklace was last seen.

"Well, it's gone; let it go," said Mr. Nathan. "There are more where this came from."

"And there is one where this has gone to," said Mr. Gardner. "Waiter, another cup, please."

When the cup was brought Mr. Gardner proceeded to pour off his coffee, and there in the dregs at the bottom of the original cup was the necklace.

"My fingers trembled so when I took the necklace in my hands," said Mr. Gardner, "that I let it fall, and it disappeared in my cup of coffee. I had never seen anything so beautiful before. Waiter, one more. The cigars, please."

And the incident was closed.—Cleveland Leader.

He Was Prepared.
Mrs. McTurk—Mr. McDougall, upstairs, fell over his window sill and was killed last night, sir. The Minister—Dear, dear, how sad! I trust he was prepared for the end? Mrs. McTurk—Oh, I'm sure he was, because when he panned our window I heard him say, "Noo! fu'r the bump!"—Dundee Advertiser.

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Pitts was in the act of loading refuse from some old buildings which were being torn down when a wheel of the wagon broke the lounge to bits. A bundle wrapped in cloth fell out. Pitts opened it carelessly, but when his eyes rested on the coins he gave the laborers a share of the money, and a holiday was at once declared on the whole job.

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The first automobile for agricultural purposes in New Jersey has been installed on the Lester Collins farm, near Moorestown. The machine will be used for plowing and harrowing and many other purposes. Collins is assured that he will be able to plow fifteen acres with his automobile while a team of horses is plowing three.

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Several people have asked us if the fifty-word letters containing kicks have to be signed. How else will we know to whom to award the prizes? Whether in the event of the letter winning a prize and being published, the name of the kicker would appear is another question. Undoubtedly the writer's wishes would be followed on that score. Our idea of the "Kick Contest" includes everything except direct and offensive personalities. Sit right down now and dash off fifty words about anything you don't like and want to register a kick against. It won't take you five minutes and you may win a prize. The more original the subject the better chance for a prize. One dollar for less than five minutes work is pretty good pay. Of course you can make your kick as short as you wish. A clever fifteen-word kick may win a prize over a full-length fifty-word one. The shorter the better.

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